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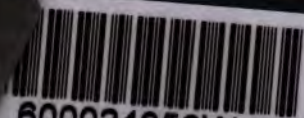
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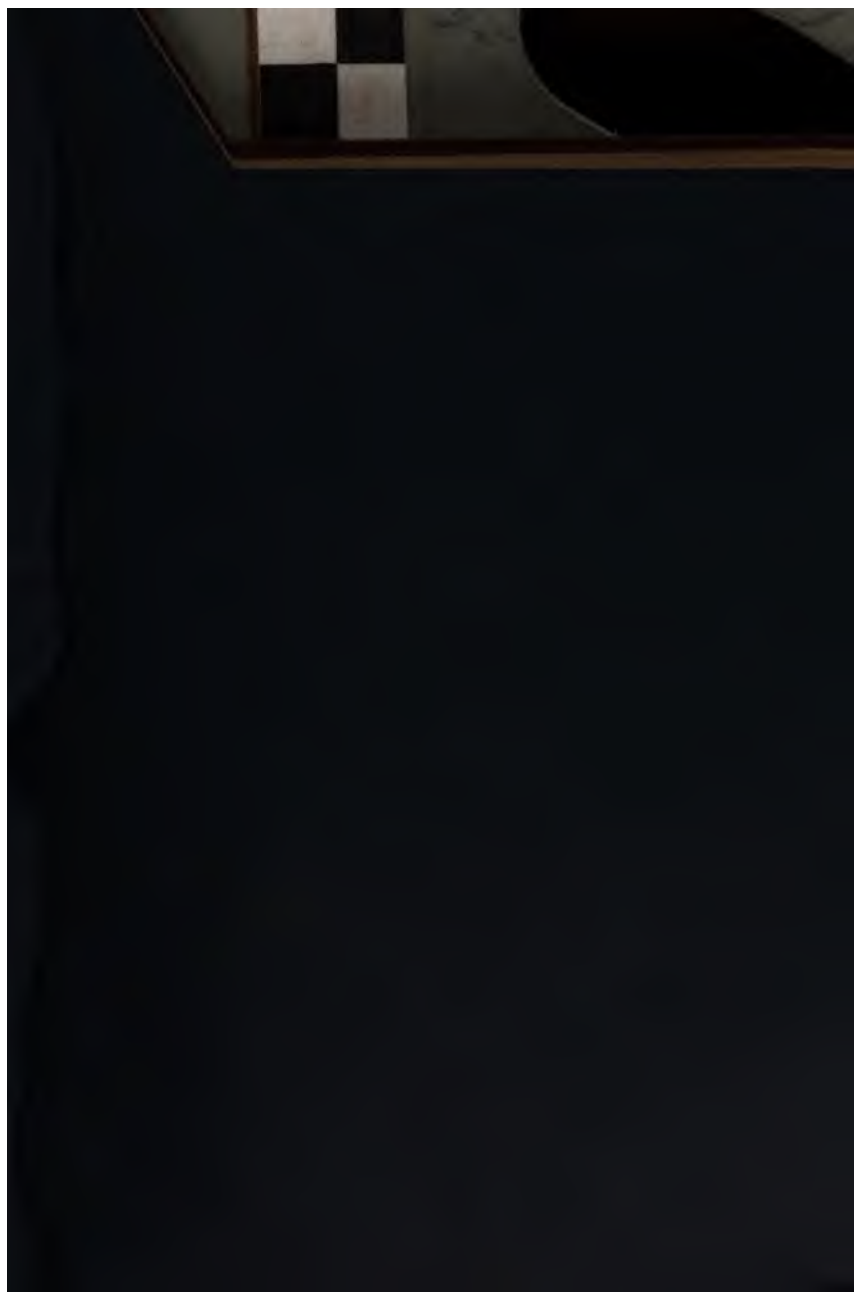
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RECOLLECTIONS OF
OBER-AMMERGAU
IN 1871



RECOLLECTIONS
OF
OBER-AMMERGAU
IN 1871

BY HENRY NUTCOMBE OXENHAM, M.A

LATE SCHOLAR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD



οἷς κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προσεγράφη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐσταυρωμένος

RIVINGTONS
London, Oxford, and Cambridge
1871

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PREFACE.

THE following *Recollections* are reprinted, after careful revision, from the *Guardian* of Oct. 4, 1871, by the kind permission of the Editor. It may, perhaps, seem almost presumptuous to add one more to the many accounts of the *Passionsspiel* which have appeared since the attention of the English public was first directed to the subject by the brief but suggestive notice of the performance of 1850 in *Quits*. Mr. MacColl especially has laid all English visitors to Ober-Ammergau during the last two years

under a permanent obligation. But while those who have witnessed the spectacle are united in a common feeling of heartfelt and reverential admiration, it cannot, of course, fail to impress different minds most vividly under somewhat different aspects. And thus each fresh record of experiences may contribute something to the fuller appreciation of a solemnity unique alike in the sacredness of its subject and in the absorbing interest which it inspires.

The author finds, on comparison, that his description enters more minutely into details than any other he has happened to meet with, though it was not undertaken with that design. He simply set himself to record his own impressions in the way most natural to

him. He has written under the conviction that whatever tends in any degree to rouse or sustain an interest in the Passion drama, must be so far promoting and deepening devotion towards the blessed mystery it represents.

One word only shall be added here. It is said that, on its first appearance about a century ago, Handel's *Messiah* had a powerful effect in checking the prevalent Unitarian tendencies of the age. Is it too much to hope that for those who are brought within its sphere, the far intenser influence of the *Passionsspiel* may help to counteract that subtler, but more wide-spread and corroding scepticism of our own day, which acknowledges in the supreme event to which all

former history converges, and from which all later history takes its departure, little else than a beautiful romance, or an idealized act of human self-devotion; and would fain build up for itself, out of the moral teachings of the Gospel, an “undogmatic” Christianity, or in other words, a Christianity without Christ?

Feast of All Saints, 1871.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE
PASSION PLAY
AT OBER-AMMERGAU



WE left Munich by the 6.45 train on Friday morning (August 25), and reached Weilheim, after a slow journey, as is usual on Bavarian, and indeed on German railways generally, at about nine, where we succeeded in securing, for seventy gulden, a roomy and comfortable *zweispanner* to take our party of four to Ober-Ammergau, and thence on to Innsbrück after the Passion Play, sleeping Sunday night at Partenkirchen. This last part of the arrangement I much regretted afterwards, as it lost us the oppor-

tunity of seeing Joseph Mayer on Sunday evening. The road from Weilheim is a beautiful one, especially the latter part of it. A long and very steep hill leads up to Ettal, with its old Benedictine Abbey, suppressed in 1803. The church, now reduced to a parish church, is a fine *Renaissance* building, with a large dome over the nave. From Ettal, a short drive of about three miles brought us into the village of Ober-Ammergau, between four and five in the afternoon; and on presenting ourselves at Sebastian Veit's, we found that rooms had been reserved for us in the neighbouring house of Joseph Kincker, who represents St. James-the-Less. We were struck at once by the devoutness and the scrupulous cleanliness of all the arrangements.

Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau. 3

Every room had a good-sized crucifix, as well as sundry pious pictures hung on the walls. And the tone of the people seemed quite in keeping with these external signs of devotion. A large number were assembled in the church about dusk, the men on one side, and the women on the other, to recite the rosary and litanies, led by a young sacristan, who represents Joseph in the triumphal procession in Egypt and is intended, as we were afterwards told, to represent the *Christus*, in 1880, should any thing unhappily occur to prevent Joseph Mayer from resuming his part: and the manner of the boys serving the various Masses, which were constantly going on at every altar, from six o'clock on Saturday morning, was an edifying contrast to what one too often observes

on such occasions. We learnt from our hostess, who was very communicative, but without a single tooth in her head, that her husband was the Apostle *Jacobus minor*; and some *Passions-kleider* were hanging up in the room where we had our meals, belonging to the children, of whom two or three also act in the Play. The good man himself appeared later; and I may observe, that next day, between twelve and one o'clock, we heard the family reciting their mid-day devotions together, in the room below us.

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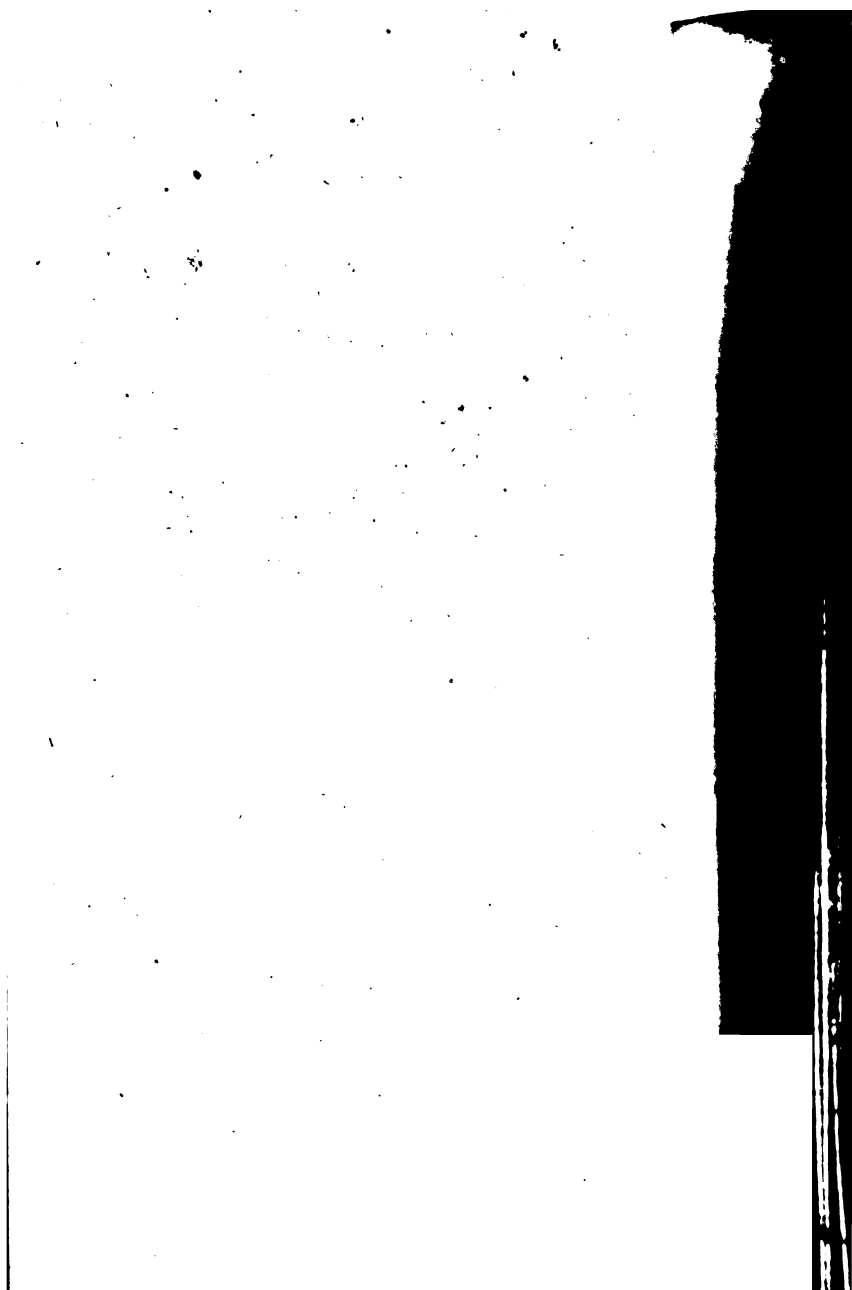
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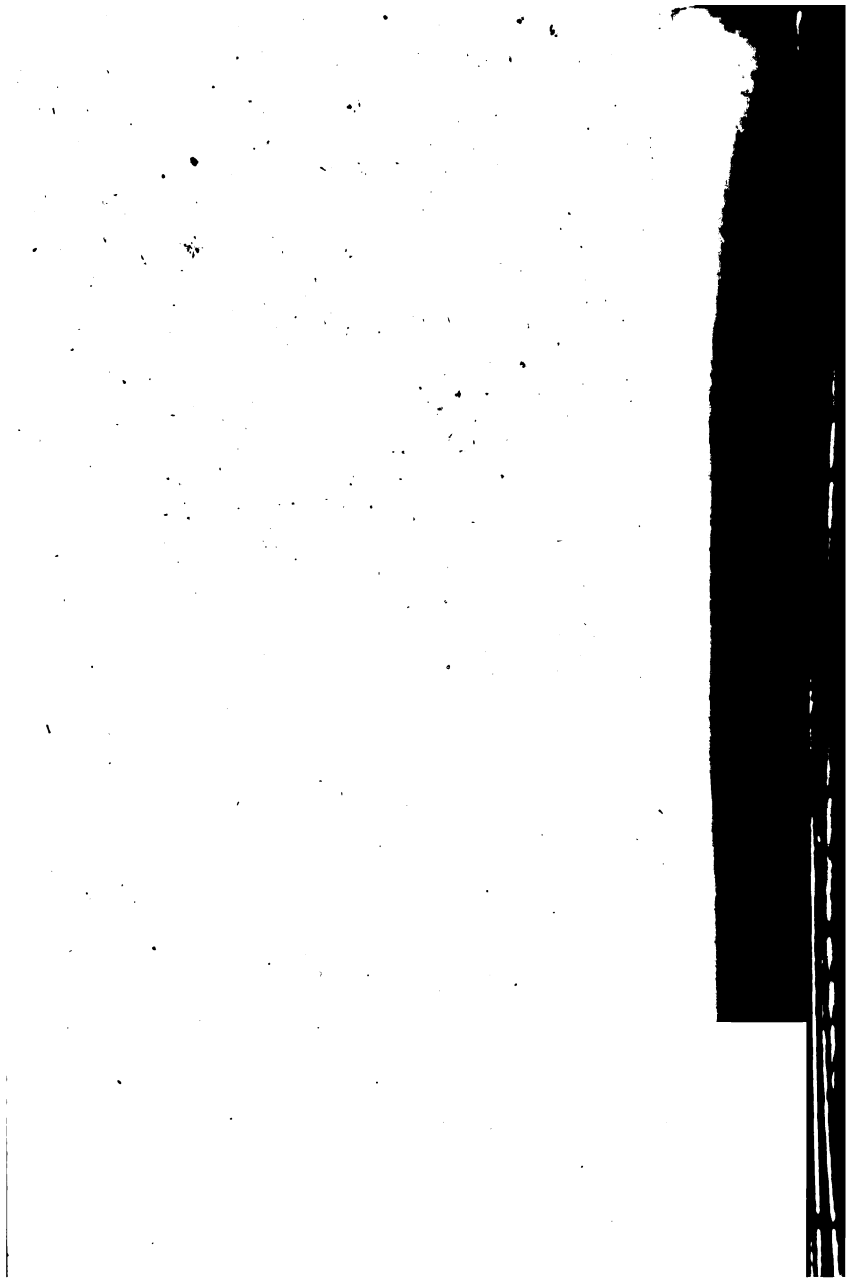


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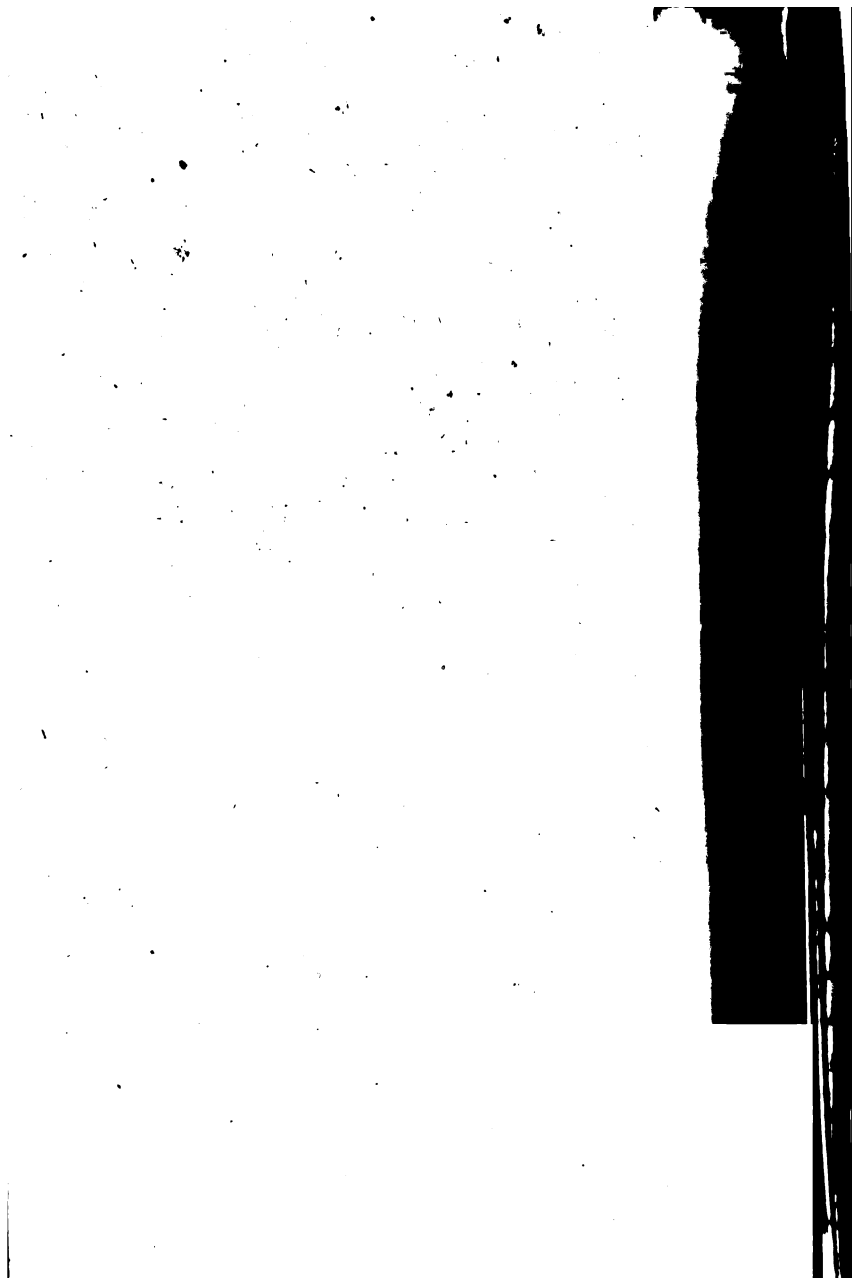
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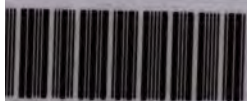
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(ὑπόδρα ἰδων) and with a strange air of mingled bewilderment, terror, and disgust. St. John's turn comes last, and when all is over Christ resumes His place at the table, and the boy, who has attended Him to carry the basin, withdraws. Judas now resumes his former attitude and mien. Then follows the institution of the Holy Eucharist. No words can convey to those who have not witnessed it the solemn significance of the action, which might almost convert a disbeliever in that sublime mystery. First the Host and then the Chalice are consecrated, each being twice elevated, once before and once after the wonder-working words are pronounced. The Blessed Sacrament is not passed round, as in some representations, but Christ Himself comes to each

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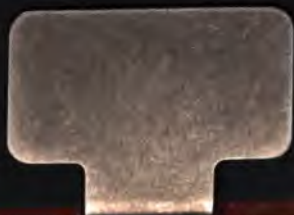
seem to observe, almost turns his head completely round from the table, while the eager questioning as to who is the traitor breaks from every side. Presently Peter moves behind our Lord's seat, and whispers in the ear of John, who leans forward on His breast, and asks Him. He replies, and immediately dips the sop, rises, and puts it into the mouth of Judas, who shows much less disturbance of manner this time, but on hearing the words, "What thou doest do quickly," looks very grave, and instantly hurries from the room. It is difficult to understand, except from their absorbing pre-occupation of mind, how the eleven should fail to perceive the significance of the proceeding, especially after their anxiety, only a few minutes before, to know who was the traitor.

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himself, and then suddenly passing to the typical crime of Joseph's brethren (*Was bietet für den Knaben ihr?*) as the curtain rises on the beautiful *tableau* which represents him being sold to the Egyptian merchants, and concluding with a solemn warning against that betrayal of Christ, whereby Christians are constantly repeating the sin of Judas. And now we are again in presence of the Sanhedrim, presided over by Annas and Caiaphas: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are seated on each side, at the end of the bench nearest the spectators. The traffickers in the Temple enter and bitterly accuse Christ, and soon Judas follows them. There is a good deal of chaffing about the price, and the unhappy man still seems to hesitate between the horror of

his crime and the hope of gain ; but he is finally reassured by the promise of the thirty pieces of silver, and the clink of the money. It is told down piece by piece on a table in the centre in front of the High Priest's elevated seat, and he greedily clutches and counts up the money, as he drops each separate coin, with a kind of chuckle, into his previously empty bag. His scruples are now at an end ; and with a significant warning from those present to keep to his bargain, and a ready promise to do so, he hastens from the council-chamber. A long debate follows, interrupted by the protests, two or three times repeated, of Joseph and Nicodemus : they are fiercely denounced by the rest, especially by Caiaphas, who at last addresses one of them (I think Nicodemus) with " What seekest

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Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau. 5

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Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau. 7

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Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau. 7

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but, unfortunately, we did not know of it till afterwards, or we should, of course, have been present at the funeral. All that evening country people from the neighbourhood were streaming into the village, but there was no sign of any thing riotous or unseemly to be observed.

And now it is time to come to the Passion Play itself. On Sunday morning the church bells woke us at 3 a.m., and from that time Masses were constantly going on at each of the five altars. At 5.30 the parish priest sang High Mass, when the church was crowded; and soon afterwards, after a hasty breakfast, we were on our way to the theatre, just on the outskirts of the village. It has been so often described and photographed that

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I need only say here there is a broad open stage in front of the seats of the audience, on which the chorus appear before the commencement of every act, and where some parts of the actual drama take place. Behind this proscenium is a wooden erection, over the pediment of which are painted figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity, with the "pious pelican" above, and the drop-scene contains a representation of Jerusalem. On each side are the houses of Pilate on the left and Annas on the right, with balconies before them, on which a great part of the trial scenes are enacted, and beyond these again are open spaces representing the streets of Jerusalem. It had rained all Saturday evening and night and Sunday morning, but when we took our

places at about 7.30 in the centre of the ninth row of the *Logenplätze*—a good position decidedly, though one would, of course, have preferred being still nearer the front—the sky was clearing, but it continued cloudy, and the sun only shone out at intervals during the day. At eight o'clock precisely, after the firing of three guns, the overture commenced, at the conclusion of which the chorus appeared on the stage, consisting of nineteen persons, including the Choragus, who stood in the centre, with the men on each side of him, and beyond them the eleven female singers, six on one side and five on the other. But their smooth faces and their common dress, consisting of loose mantles of various colours, worn over white tunics, with a long robe reaching to the

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feet beneath, were so exactly similar, that it was difficult to distinguish between men and women, with the single exception of the Choragus, who had a black beard. Their voices were unusually strong and sweet, especially that of the Choragus, who opened every chorus with a recitative of his own; but, on the whole, the men's voices were the best, as was also very decidedly their acting throughout the play. Nothing could be more simple and graceful than the movements of the chorus as they filed off on either side the curtain for the *tableaux vivants*—one or two of which, in one case three, precede every scene—and again for the actual representation of the successive incidents of the Passion. Both their action and their song, explaining and moralizing on the

next ensuing point of the solemn drama, recall, as they are evidently intended to recall, the functions of a Greek chorus, and appearing as they did before an immense audience, and in a very conspicuous costume, their unconsciousness of manner, even that of the women, for the most part, was remarkable. The words of the choric songs, which are singularly beautiful, are printed in full in the text-books, but no part of the dialogue. The opening chorus briefly records the mystery of the Fall and Redemption of man, and at a fixed point in it the singers separated off to right and left, while the curtain rose for the first of the *tableaux vivants*, exhibiting Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise by an angel with a flaming sword, shortly to be followed by another.

and singularly touching representation of a cross, before which is seen a group of kneeling figures, while the chorus sing softly a plaintive prayer, entreating "the Eternal to hear the stammering voices of His children, since a child can but stammer." And here let me call attention, once for all, to the marvellous grouping and perfectly motionless repose of these *tableaux*, some of which contain hundreds of figures, including children of all ages down to three years old; yet so absolute is their stillness, that you might imagine yourself gazing on a picture or a statue. Our hostess told us that the children were practised all through the previous winter, and unless they had acquired the art of remaining *ganz ruhig* were not allowed to act. Those who are not

familiar with the typical interpretation of Scripture cannot fail to be greatly struck by the significance of these *tableaux*, in which the "Law and the Prophets" are seen to bear such unmistakable witness to Christ, while even those who most habitually read the Old Testament by the reflex light of the New, will find something to learn from the teaching thus vividly imparted.

As the curtain rises for the first act of the Passion, a long procession is seen slowly winding down the slope of Mount Olivet, strewing palms and garments along the road, and chanting "Hosanna to the Son of David," and soon the one Form comes into view on whom the whole life and reality of the drama depends, and from whom it is difficult even for a minute to with-

draw one's gaze. Though the interest never flags throughout, yet the difference is instantly felt in every scene where He is absent. One may pause afterwards to reflect, to compare, and to criticize, but it is almost impossible *at the time* to find room for any but the one absorbing thought, "Jesus, our Love, is crucified." From the moment He is first seen seated on an ass, clothed in His purple robe and red mantle, with His long dark hair and majestic countenance in the pathos of its unearthly sorrow, hearing the plaudits of the multitude, but taking no pleasure in them, and, "setting His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem," because there He wills to die, He draws to Himself every eye and every heart. It requires an effort to remember that you are not gazing on

the reality. Suddenly, almost imperceptibly, the scene has changed: the Hosannas have died away, and He is standing in the Temple, surrounded by an angry multitude, whose scowling faces haunt one long afterwards, but who dare not now resist the quiet conscious majesty of His words and mien. For the first time He speaks, with that pure, distinct, musical intonation of voice, which never failed throughout, and allowed no syllable to be lost even at the distance where we were sitting—"My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." The tables are overthrown, the doves flutter away, and the traffickers in sacred things are driven with scourges from the Temple. It might seem a difficult office to discharge without some

appearance at least of abruptness, if not impatience; but neither then nor in any later scene does His dignity for a moment desert Him. And I may just observe, in passing, that while the numerous photographs of the *Christus* I have seen are all excellent, that representing Him with the scourge in His hand is one of the most characteristic. The cleansing of the Temple is evidently treated in the Ammergau *Passionsspiel* as the point of departure of all the events which follow. In the excited, angry conference between the discomfited sellers and the chief Priests and Pharisees, who are closely leagued with them in a common interest, which immediately ensues on the withdrawal of Christ and the Apostles, the plan of vengeance against the unwelcome

reformer of cherished abuses is first agreed upon, to be subsequently brought into more defined shape. And in almost every succeeding scene down to the Crucifixion, the same familiar figures reappear among the accusers or revilers of Christ, or the triumphant witnesses of His humiliation.

The second act is introduced by a choric ode referring to the conspiracy of Joseph's brethren against him (*Sehet dort, der Traümer kommt*), during which one of the most touching *tableaux* is exhibited: the boy stands in the background of the picture in his many-coloured tunic, his fair young face blanched with anguish, while his brothers are plotting to throw him into the well. The curtain falls to rise again on the first council of the Scribes and Pharisees

against Christ, presided over by Annas and Caiaphas, who sit side by side on a lofty throne in the centre, immediately facing the spectators, while the remaining members of the council are ranged on benches on either side. A lively and passionate debate ensues, and the resolve, somehow or other, to bring about the downfall of the Nazarene, is unanimously adopted. Caiaphas utters the unconscious prophecy, that it is right one man should die for the people, and all join in the cry, "*Auch wir stimmen für den Tod!*" In this and the subsequent debates of the Sanhedrim, I regretted much that my imperfect familiarity with conversational German prevented my following accurately, at that distance, all the details of the discussion. Its general drift was

obvious enough, as were the parts respectively assigned to Annas and Caiaphas. The fierce, though not undignified, intolerance of Caiaphas, and what one of our party happily designated the stolid conservatism of the older representative of established orthodoxy, complemented each other; both potentates alike were fully agreed on the practical result to be achieved.

The next act, which includes the Supper at Bethany, and the parting of Jesus from His Mother, is introduced by two *tableaux*. The first, a very touching one, represents the parting of Tobias from his parents, under the guidance of St. Raphael. The second, where the Bride of the Canticles appears in a garden, surrounded by her attendant maidens, but mourning the loss of her Beloved, is one of

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the very few, almost the only one, which was a little flat; but its flatness was amply redeemed by the accompanying song of the chorus, though it hardly equals the previous ode on the grief of Tobias' mother, which has, too, a more immediate bearing on the Passion scene which immediately follows. Christ and His Apostles are first seen in the streets of Bethany, when Simon the Pharisee comes forward and invites them to his house. The invitation is courteously accepted; and we next see the Apostles seated round the table. Christ sits apart, without partaking Himself of the feast, and Simon stands behind Him. The Magdalen hurries in, falls at His feet, anoints and wipes them with her hair, and again hastily retires. What I said before about the acting of the women not

being equal to that of the men, applies, I think, especially to her, though it hardly struck one at the time. But I must be distinctly understood to mean only that her part might have been better sustained,—not that there was any thing incongruous, still less offensive, about it. The utmost that can be said is that it was somewhat inadequate, when judged by the very high standard which the subject, no less than the actual rendering of the *Passionsspiel*, compels one to adopt. There is nothing in the demeanour of any of the actors which in the slightest degree jars on one's sense of fitness, and this in itself is very high praise. But to return to the scene before us. Judas is here first prominently brought forward; but I shall have more to say of his admirable fulfil-

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ment of his part by and by. After they have left the house of Simon, he complains of the waste of the ointment, and is answered very gently by Christ in the memorable words recorded by three Evangelists. Simon shows no indignation at the act of the Magdalen, and his manner is throughout studiously deferential towards his Divine Guest, by whom he is treated with a gracious courtesy. After his departure follows a very touching—what some have felt to be the most touching—scene, at least in the earlier portion of the drama. For the first time our Lady is brought on the stage (Franziska Flunger), to bid her Son farewell before He enters on His last sufferings. Again and again she approaches to embrace Him, and there is something inexpressibly

touching in the "Mutter, Mutter!" repeated again and again in grave, tender accents of sorrowful but unfaltering resolution before the final parting. Many of those near us were in tears. The perfect blending of human sympathy with the consciousness of a more than human work and destiny in the *Christus* cannot be conveyed in words. Yet profoundly as it must impress every spectator, this was not to me the most impressive of the earlier scenes.

When the chorus again came forward it was to sing the lament over Jerusalem (*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, erwache*), into which is introduced a reference to the pride and punishment of Vash-ti, and the elevation of Esther to her vacant place, to illustrate the accompanying *tableaux*. The refrain of the song was still ringing in

our ears when the curtain rose, and Christ was seen with the Apostles on Mount Olivet weeping over the apostate city. In calm, low tones, He pronounces the prophetic words of doom, and afterwards Peter and John are solemnly blessed and despatched to prepare the Passover. I may say here, where they first come into prominence, that St. Peter's part is throughout admirably sustained, and no painter could desire a more perfect ideal for St. John. But his acting—though one never feels it to be acting at all at the time—was hardly equal to that of his brother Apostle. When the rest have left the stage, Judas remains behind, and betrays his incipient tendencies in a long soliloquy, during which first one and then another of the Temple ministers

come up and seize the opportunity to shape his wavering thoughts to their own purposes. They see through his besetting temptation, and do not leave him till a future meeting has been agreed upon, though he seems to shudder at his own voice, and wishes to unsay one moment what he said the last. But he had thought his Master would establish an earthly kingdom, and is bitterly disappointed as his dreams of avarice and ambition fade before the unwelcome prospect which dawns more and more clearly on his view. As he passes from the stage, Peter and John appear in the streets of Jerusalem, where they meet a boy in a green tunic, who calls his master, and the room for the Paschal Supper is promised them.

The next scene is, I think, the longest, and to me certainly the most impressive, or rather overpowering, of all but one. It is introduced by a noble choric song, and two of the most perfect of all the *tableaux*, both containing some hundreds of figures. The first represents the golden shower of Manna descending on the multitudes of Israel, with children, some barely three years old, kneeling in the foreground, all with uplifted faces and in perfect stillness. It was a picture well worthy of what I have always considered one of the noblest of Keble's poems—the "Song of the Manna Gatherers." In an incredibly short time the curtain rose again to reveal the same figures differently grouped, with two young men in the foreground bearing on a pole the

rich cluster of the grapes of Eshcol, typifying the chalice of the Eucharist, as the Manna typifies the Host. Moses and Aaron were conspicuous in both pictures.

The presentation of the Last Supper is evidently taken, with slight modifications, from the well-known fresco of Leonardo da Vinci. The Apostles are seated (not reclining) at one side of a long table; our Lord occupies the centre, with St. John on His left and St. Peter on His right, next to whom sits Judas, with his red beard and hair, and yellow dress. First, they eat the Paschal Supper, and the words, "With desire I have desired," &c., are spoken, and then the Cup of the Old Covenant is passed round, with the words, "I will no more drink this fruit of the vine, until the

kingdom of God shall come." The interest becomes more absorbing as Christ rises from the table, and prepares to wash the disciples' feet. The boy in the green tunic, whom Peter and John had met in the street, reappears with a basin and towel, wherewith Christ girds Himself, and He then passes slowly round, kneeling before each Apostle in turn, beginning with St. Peter, whose reluctance at first, and his eagerness after hearing the explanation of the act, are vividly portrayed. As He approaches Judas, who comes second in order, the unhappy man shrinks back with a look of shame and horror, and continues throughout the remainder of the ceremony, which henceforth proceeds in silence, to watch every motion of Christ, with half-averted face

(ὑπόδρα ἰδων) and with a strange air of mingled bewilderment, terror, and disgust. St. John's turn comes last, and when all is over Christ resumes His place at the table, and the boy, who has attended Him to carry the basin, withdraws. Judas now resumes his former attitude and mien. Then follows the institution of the Holy Eucharist. No words can convey to those who have not witnessed it the solemn significance of the action, which might almost convert a disbeliever in that sublime mystery. First the Host and then the Chalice are consecrated, each being twice elevated, once before and once after the wonder-working words are pronounced. The Blessed Sacrament is not passed round, as in some representations, but Christ Himself comes to each

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in turn, beginning again on His right with St. Peter, first bearing the Host, which is placed in their mouths, and then a second time to present the consecrated Chalice to their lips. Judas turns half round in his seat each time that Christ approaches him, and the same guilty, terrified look comes over his countenance; but to him, as to the rest, the Blessed Sacrament in both kinds is administered. A look of profound awe is on every face, and no word breaks the solemn stillness. Again Christ is seated, and with an appearance of intense relief Judas again resumes his old position, but only for a few moments. Almost immediately the well-known words about the betrayer are uttered in a tone of deep sadness, and Judas, with a visible shudder, which however none

seem to observe, almost turns his head completely round from the table, while the eager questioning as to who is the traitor breaks from every side. Presently Peter moves behind our Lord's seat, and whispers in the ear of John, who leans forward on His breast, and asks Him. He replies, and immediately dips the sop, rises, and puts it into the mouth of Judas, who shows much less disturbance of manner this time, but on hearing the words, "What thou doest do quickly," looks very grave, and instantly hurries from the room. It is difficult to understand, except from their absorbing pre-occupation of mind, how the eleven should fail to perceive the significance of the proceeding, especially after their anxiety, only a few minutes before, to know who was the traitor.

But they do not seem to suspect it, as indeed it is evident from the Gospel narrative that they did not at the time. It will be observed that both the Paschal Cup of the Old Testament and the sop administered to Judas are kept quite distinct from the Blessed Sacrament. After his withdrawal Christ addresses to the eleven some parts of the discourse running through four chapters of St. John (ch. xiii.—xvi.), other portions of which, as also of the prayer in ch. xvii., are spoken later in the Garden of Olives. They sing the short psalm *Laudate Dominum* (Ps. cxvii. E.V.) as a grace, and slowly pass from the room. As the curtain fell, it left me with a feeling of exhaustion, as though I had undergone some intense mental or bodily strain, or rather, as if I had just

turned away from the deathbed of a beloved friend. Nor do I think the profound impression, which gave a new reality to all one's previous conceptions of that solemn scene, can ever be obliterated. The acting of Judas was wonderful, while that of Peter and John left little or nothing to be desired; but yet one could hardly bear to *withdraw* one's gaze for a moment from the central Figure, whose awful dignity of divine sorrow gave its interpretation to the whole. No one, I suppose, could witness it without deep religious emotion and real profit, who was not either an infidel or an idiot. And the effect is perhaps enhanced by the startling contrast of the next act of the drama.

The chorus which follows is a pathetic remonstrance addressed directly to the traitor

himself, and then suddenly passing to the typical crime of Joseph's brethren (*Was bietet für den Knaben ihr?*) as the curtain rises on the beautiful *tableau* which represents him being sold to the Egyptian merchants, and concluding with a solemn warning against that betrayal of Christ, whereby Christians are constantly repeating the sin of Judas. And now we are again in presence of the Sanhedrim, presided over by Annas and Caiaphas: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are seated on each side, at the end of the bench nearest the spectators. The traffickers in the Temple enter and bitterly accuse Christ, and soon Judas follows them. There is a good deal of chaffering about the price, and the unhappy man still seems to hesitate between the horror of


his crime and the hope of gain ; but he is finally reassured by the promise of the thirty pieces of silver, and the clink of the money. It is told down piece by piece on a table in the centre in front of the High Priest's elevated seat, and he greedily clutches and counts up the money, as he drops each separate coin, with a kind of chuckle, into his previously empty bag. His scruples are now at an end ; and with a significant warning from those present to keep to his bargain, and a ready promise to do so, he hastens from the council-chamber. A long debate follows, interrupted by the protests, two or three times repeated, of Joseph and Nicodemus : they are fiercely denounced by the rest, especially by Caiaphas, who at last addresses one of them (I think Nicodemus) with " What seekest

thou here, apostate?" and soon afterwards they go out together. The debate waxes fiercer after they are gone, and at last the council breaks up, amid cries of "*Er sterbe, er sterbe,*" from all sides. The passion depicted on every face contrasts strangely with the awful calmness of the scenes which immediately precede and follow.

The chorus again comments, but without addressing him, on the treachery of Judas now consummated, and then passes to the toiling of Adam in the sweat of his face, as typical of the Bloody Sweat of Gethsemane. The *tableau* represents him digging the ground, with Eve seated in the background, and four or five children grouped around in various attitudes, the eldest (our guide of the previous day) a

boy of twelve, the youngest hardly three years old. The words of the accompanying song (*So wird's unserm Jesus heiss, &c.*) carry on one's thoughts from the first to the second Adam, and His more awful agony. A second *tableau* foreshadows the treachery of Judas by Joab stabbing Amasa, while the dirge-like wail of the chorus, with its constant piercing refrain of *Ihr Felsen Gabaon*, prepares the mind for the ensuing scene, where we behold Christ and the eleven slowly entering the Garden of Olives. He looks pale and faint as He utters the words "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death," and proceeds to address to them some portions of the discourse recorded by St. John, and to offer parts of the great intercessory prayer, "Father, the hour is come," &c. Then He

bids them watch and pray, and taking Peter, James, and John apart from the rest, again charges them earnestly to watch with Him, and proceeds alone to a raised mound on the left, where He kneels and prays in His agony. Twice He comes back and rouses the three disciples from their heavy sleep of sorrow, but they seem to have lost all power over their will, and He excuses their seeming indifference in the words so often quoted for consolation or warning, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." When He kneels the third time, an angel, who, by-the-bye, has no chalice in his hand, as usually represented, appears to comfort Him. This is the only point in the scene which disappoints one, and the same criticism applies to other appearances of angels



throughout the Play. There is nothing angelic about them, and their interposition strikes one as strange rather than supernatural. When Christ comes for the third time to wake the sleepers, the traitor with his band of Roman soldiers is already seen approaching through the olive boughs. Judas betrays no hesitation now. He walks straight up to his Master and kisses Him, and receives His calm searching rebuke, spoken without any touch of anger or impatience. Christ then turns to the soldiers, who fall to the ground on hearing His question, and only lay hands on Him after it has been repeated a second time. Peter instantly strikes off the ear of Malchus, which is as instantly healed, and Christ bids them let His

disciples go, and is at once instinctively obeyed. Then He quietly submits Himself to their will, and suffers them to bind His hands and lead Him away; but His majesty becomes more conspicuous in bonds, and it is clear that they are but fulfilling His will, though they know it not. As the procession passes out of sight, Peter and John reappear, converse for a few minutes, and embrace each other before leaving the garden. When the curtain fell on this seventh act at 11.30 the first part of the *Passionsspiel* was over, and there was an interval of above an hour, during which every one quitted the theatre.

We were all again in our places by 12.45, when the first chorus (*Begonnen ist der Kampf der Schmerzen*) warned us that the actual Passion

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was already begun. The accompanying *tableau*, representing Micaiah before Ahab, struck on the face for speaking the truth, and surrounded by the false prophets, prepared us for the next scene, where Christ is arraigned before Annas. The High Priest is waiting impatiently on the balcony of his house to the right of the open stage, and soon Judas hurries in, to tell him of the success of the plot, and directly afterwards the loud mocking laughter of the soldiers is heard from the street to the right, and the procession slowly emerges with the divine Sufferer, clothed as before, but with hands bound behind His back, in the midst. Scribes and Pharisees, and the Temple ministers, with an evil triumph on their faces, lead the way; a halt is made before the balcony, up to which

Christ is conducted, and His trial before Annas begins. It is presented in strict accordance with the Gospel narrative, but one realizes, as one never did before, His imperturbable calmness². When at length He broke silence with the words "I have taught openly," &c., and the soldier rudely struck Him on the mouth and received the grave passionless rebuke recorded by the Evangelist, a perceptible shudder ran through the audience. Again the procession is formed in the street beneath, and the Redeemer is borne away in an opposite direction towards the house of Caiaphas, pale and very weary, but losing nothing of His patient dignity.

² There is of course a question among Gospel harmonists as to what took place in the house of Annas. The order of events here followed is that of St. John as understood by St. Chrysostom, Theophylact and others.

Peter and John, who had followed behind, linger a few minutes to bewail in almost hopeless sadness their Master's impending doom.

The trial before Caiaphas is preceded by two *tableaux*, representing the unjust condemnation of Naboth (*Es sterbe Naboth ! fort mit ihm zum Tod !*) and the sufferings of Job. The chorus accompanying the latter, with its constant refrain of *Ach, welch ein Mensch !* applied first to the typical and then to the divine Sufferer, is peculiarly touching. And now we see the same procession as before approaching the house of Caiaphas, and presently Christ stands before him in the judgment-hall. His old accusers from the Temple and others also are there to bear witness against Him ; but there is still a difficulty in establishing the case till His own solemn

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words, "*Ich bin Christus, der Sohn Gottes*," give occasion to the High Priest to dispense with further evidence. An extract, apparently from the Jewish law, is read out, and sentence of death pronounced. And now the scene shifts to the vestibule of the High Priest's palace, where soldiers and servants are lounging about the fire, and Peter and John timidly approach. Peter seeks to avoid observation; but a maidservant recognizes and challenges him as a follower of Christ, and his three denials, made in loud tones and with curses, follow in quick succession; the cock crows a second time, and at that moment the procession bringing Jesus from the judgment-hall passes by. He casts a momentary glance on Peter—to one of our party it seemed not sufficiently

marked, but not to me—and is gone. The effect is instantaneous. Peter hurries out, and his repentance (which is forcibly depicted in one of the most characteristic photographs of him) is at least as conspicuous as his fall. St. John joins and consoles him. Again the scene changes to a prison in the High Priest's palace, where we see Christ in the hands of the brutal soldiery, who buffet, blindfold, mock, and at last fling Him on the ground. It was a scene few could witness unmoved, and many were in tears. But neither His patience nor His dignity for a moment forsook Him, not even when He was thrown at full length upon the ground and roughly lifted again to His feet—for He was too weak now to raise Himself—by His tormentors.

The next chorus refers to the despairing remorse of Judas, who cannot any more than Cain escape the pains of Hell, which he bears within himself, whithersoever he may fly. The *tableau* represents Cain standing, in speechless horror, over the corpse of his murdered brother ; while behind him is seen his own altar with its dying fires, and in the background to the right the flame burns high and clear on the altar of Abel's accepted sacrifice, which had roused his deadly jealousy. For artistic effect few scenes could equal that which follows, of the despair of Judas. He appears once more before the Sanhedrim, who have assembled early on the Friday morning to confirm the sentence of Caiaphas, to attempt, too late, in a paroxysm of conscience-stricken

anguish, to undo his evil work. But his eager repudiation of the truth of his former charges and bitter confessions of sin only provoke angry or contemptuous sneers. "*Was geht das uns an? das war deine Sache,*" is the cold reply. In an agony of remorse he flings the bag full of silver against the foot of the High Priest's throne, and rushes out. It is quietly picked up by one of the attendants, and the use to be made of it is discussed and settled with a sharp business-like indifference to the higher interests at stake that makes one shudder. Christ is now again brought before the Sanhedrim, the sentence against Him is confirmed, and they resolve to apply to Pilate to put it into execution. And then the scene shifts to a bleak waste, with a withered tree

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conspicuous in the midst. Judas stands with his back to it, wringing his hands, and accusing himself in a frenzy of agonized despair. It sounded at times almost too much like repentance, and one could not help feeling something of compassion for him. But his reiterated cry that he can no longer bear the torture of his conscience,—that for him there is no hope, no pardon, no redemption, point to the bitter end. He turns, fixes his gaze on the tree, tears off his girdle, and is in the act of fastening it on a bough, when the curtain drops. Of the scenes in which the *Christus* does not play a prominent part this is, I think, the most impressive.

The first part of the Trial before Pilate follows, introduced by a *tableau* of Daniel

before Darius, where his accusers are extorting sentence of death against him from the reluctant King. Pilate appears on the balcony of his house on the left, while a crowd emerges, as before, from the street below, surrounding the band of soldiers with their Prisoner, bound and almost fainting, but preserving His unruffled calm. Peter Flunger, who represents Pilate now as in 1860, took the principal character in the *Passionsspiel* of 1850, described by the authoress of *Quits*. His acting is throughout admirable, perhaps the best of any of the subordinate characters, but in one sense it seemed almost too good. There is about his whole demeanour an earnestness and gravity which hardly accord with the ordinary estimate of "the unjust judge;" and his en-

deavours to secure the acquittal of Christ, though not perhaps more frequent than those recorded in the Gospels—for he did really make several distinct attempts to avoid condemning Him—certainly gave me a stronger impression of sustained and deliberate purpose. His treatment of his Prisoner is throughout studiously courteous—almost deferential, and his conviction of His entire innocence unmistakable from the first. The famous question, “*Was ist Wahrheit?*” was uttered, as I specially noted, “with no touch of scorn,” but in a tone of sad, half-hopeless perplexity, though he quitted the balcony immediately afterwards without waiting for a reply. The present scene, throughout which Christ maintains an unbroken silence, ends with Pilate sending

Him to Herod, after hearing He is a Galilean, to the obvious annoyance of His accusers, who are impatient for a speedy sentence.

The next *tableau* represents Samson in the Temple at Gaza, not David's servants before Hanon, as the text books give it. And then follows the mockery, for it cannot be called the trial of Christ before Herod, who has all the appearance of a coarse, sensual bully, unwilling to proceed to extremities against an innocent person, but enjoying the gross insults heaped on his Victim, whose persistent silence has foiled his stupid curiosity to witness some magical trick. When he is sated with this coarse buffoonery Christ is again sent back to Pilate.

The renewed trial before Pilate is intro-

duced by two *tableaux*. In the first, Joseph's many-coloured tunic is brought to his aged father, stained with blood; in the second, the youthful Isaac (the boy I mentioned before) lies naked and motionless on the altar, with his hands tied behind him, while Abraham is arrested in the act of striking the fatal blow, by an angel on the left, who points to the ram caught in a thicket. Again the crowd is gathered before Pilate's balcony, clamouring for the death of Christ, whom he once more ineffectually endeavours to rescue from their hands, by ordering Him to be scourged. As the curtain rises before the enclosed stage in the centre, He is seen stripped and bound to a pillar, with the soldiers scourging Him, and blood pouring from His wounds. He

does not actually fall to the ground, as in the ordinary tradition. After they have unbound Him, the purple robe is thrown over His shoulders, the reed placed in His hand, and He is seated on a stone, and the crown of long, blunt thorns cruelly pressed into His brows, amid the brutal gibes of the soldiers, who then kneel before Him in mockery. He is passive in their hands—wearied almost to death; but yet He looks what they jestingly call Him, not a prisoner or a culprit, but indeed a king. The spectacle is a visible comment on the prophet's words, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."

Once again He is before the judgment-seat, and the scene including the *Ecce Homo* and final sentence is introduced by two

tableaux of a very opposite kind. In the first Joseph appears on a triumphal car, crowned with laurel, and with a gold chain round his neck, while the multitudes of Egypt shout his praises as the delight and friend and father of their country. The contrast in the crowning and exaltation of the mystical Joseph is indicated by the words of the chorus. In the second *tableau*, the scape-goat prefigures the acquittal of Barabbas while Christ is sacrificed, and the chorus pleading for Him is answered from behind the scenes by the fierce cries of the people, "*Barabbas sei von Banden frei! Nein! Jesus sei von Banden frei!*" &c. As the chorus retires, the angry multitude throng the open space in front of Pilate's house, who comes

forward again on the balcony, leading Jesus, clothed in His purple robe and crowned with thorns, to make a last appeal to the compassion of the people. But the priests and their satellites are moving to and fro among the crowd, eager to stifle every passing sentiment of compassion; and the cry "Crucify Him, crucify Him," rings from all sides. Pilate is more anxious than ever to save Him, but the menacing cries of the multitude, inspired by their priestly leaders, "If thou let this man go, thou art no friend of Cæsar," shake his resolution. His last attempt to enlist popular favour on his side by producing Barabbas, an old man with a white beard, who now appears on the stage, and offering to release Jesus in his place, is foiled by the cry

"Barabbas sei von Banden frei!" He dares no longer resist the pressure put upon him, but first orders water to be brought. The actual washing of the hands, as also, so far as we observed, the message from his wife, was omitted on this occasion. But before pronouncing sentence he uttered the vain excuse, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man," which at once elicits the terrible response of the people. While this is going on, our Lady, with the Magdalen and St. John are seen among the crowd below. After pronouncing sentence, Pilate hastily quits the balcony, and Christ is led away by the soldiers the crowd still following with yells of triumphant hatred, which die away in the distance as they pass from view.

And now we approach the closing scenes of the awful drama—the way of the Cross and the Crucifixion—which are introduced by three very striking *tableaux*. In the first, the boy Isaac is again seen, ascending Moriah by his father's side, carrying the wood on which he is himself to be offered up; in the second, the Israelites are sinking under the deadly bite of the fiery serpents; while, in the third, which almost immediately follows, the same multitude is seen quite differently grouped, and looking up to the brazen serpent which Moses has suspended on a cross in their midst. Both these *tableaux* are admirably arranged. When the curtain again rises from before the enclosed stage in the centre, Calvary is seen in the distance.

From the left of the open space a little company of mourners slowly draw near, and take their stand under the balcony of Pilate's house. It consists of the Blessed Virgin, the Magdalen, St. John, and Nicodemus, who converse sadly together, in low tones; while, from the opposite side, beyond the house of Annas, shouts are heard, and soon a procession, headed by a horseman carrying the Roman standard with the S.P.Q.R., slowly emerges into view. A long array of priests, Pharisees, and others advance; but the eye is arrested by the one central Figure, in His accustomed dress, but still wearing the crown of thorns, and bending under the weight of the heavy Cross laid upon His shoulders. The thieves, with their crosses, which are smaller, follow

Him. Meanwhile, a solitary figure has been observed approaching, as though by chance, down the enclosed space in the centre, which serves here as a side street, to meet the procession. As Jesus totters, though without actually falling beneath His burden, and it becomes evident even to His tormentors that they cannot safely tax His failing strength any further, the soldiers seize on Simon, and "compel him" to carry the Cross, which is transferred to his shoulders, and thus borne before our Lord. He does not, as sometimes represented, only *help* to carry it. And so far from falling thrice, as represented in the "Stations of the Cross," Christ does not, as I have already remarked, actually fall to the ground at all. The traditional action of St.

Veronica now followed, but there was no impression on the pocket-handkerchief. And then the "daughters of Jerusalem" drew near weeping for Him, and were addressed in the only words He uttered during this scene. All this occasions a long halt, about the centre of the open space, which manifestly chafes the impatience of the priests. The next incident is evidently modelled, as a friend suggested to me, on Raphael's *Spasimo di Sicilia*. As the procession again moves on, Jesus comes in view of His Mother, and turns on her a long, silent look. Very slowly—for even the Roman soldiers perceive that it is useless to urge Him now—the long train sweeps by, and gradually disappears on the left of the open stage, and then, at a little distance, Mary and

those about her also follow, and the curtain in the centre falls.

There are no *tableaux* between this and the Crucifixion scene—I presume, in order to avoid any break of continuity—but the chorus advance in black (instead of coloured) mantles over their white tunics, black sandals, and black woven into their crowns. An address, warning the spectators of the solemn spectacle to follow, is recited in monotone by the Chorus, but towards the close it passes into song, and is finally taken up by the whole chorus, in the words, “O bring to this love of His pious contrition of heart for an offering on the altar of the Cross,” &c. During the latter part the dull, heavy strokes of a hammer are heard, and when the curtain rises Christ is

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seen nailed to the Cross, which lies flat on the ground in the centre, surrounded by a crowd of priests, soldiers, and others. The crosses of the two thieves have already been erected on either side, and they are roped to them, their arms hanging back over the transverse beams. And now the central Cross is rudely dragged along the ground, lifted and fixed into its place with a jerk which seems to agonize His every limb. It is after this, and not, as usually represented, while the Cross is still lying on the ground, that He utters the first of the seven words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." His face is deadly pale, and His body seamed with lines of blood. It is difficult to believe He is not actually nailed to the Cross; no trace

of any ligament can be discerned³. The remainder of the seven words follow in succession, but the fifth ("I thirst") was spoken between the "Behold thy Mother" and the "Eloi, Eloi," immediately before the sponge was raised to His lips, which He just touched and then turned away. When He has uttered in a loud voice the last commendation of His soul into the Father's hands, and bowed His head in death, the sound of thunder is heard; and a messenger hurries in, breathless, to inform Annas and Caiaphas, who are standing on the right, watching the accomplishment of their purpose, that the veil of the Temple is

³ This was the result of our inspection through powerful opera-glasses, and all testimony I have heard confirms it. The secret is very wisely confined to the two or three persons immediately concerned.

rent—an announcement which only increases their bitter hatred, and Caiaphas turns with a muttered curse to the dead figure on the Cross. All this time, in ghastly unconcern at the awful tragedy enacting before their eyes, a group of four soldiers have been sitting on the ground directly in front of the Cross of the dead or dying God, jesting over His sufferings and dicing for His raiment. They had first torn the red mantle across the middle, and then they sat down and began throwing their dice for the seamless purple robe. It made one shudder to look at them; but then, too, I remembered the merciful tradition which has floated down eighteen centuries, that, for all for whom it was immediately offered, that dying intercession has

had its perfect work ; and that not one of those who smote, or pierced, or nailed Him to the Cross, but is now a saint before His throne. I should have said before that the dialogue between the two thieves was omitted ; but not, of course, the forgiveness of the penitent thief on the right. Meanwhile, Mary and St. John and the Magdalen are standing silently beneath the Cross. And now soldiers came up to break the legs of the two thieves, whose heads dropped heavily on their breasts, and they were taken down from their crosses ; but when the soldiers approached the Cross of Christ, the Magdalen pushed them back, and on seeing that He was already dead they desisted. But Longinus lifted his spear, and thrust it deliberately into the left side, making

a long dark gash on the dead body. Of course, one knew it was not really blood, nor is it difficult to understand how this part of the action is effected; yet so life-like is the whole impression of the scene, that I could hardly suppress a cry of horror at this crowning indignity. Joseph and Nicodemus now appear with their order from Pilate, and are bitterly reviled by Annas and Caiaphas, and then in the deep stillness which follows the withdrawal of the priests, the deposition from the Cross takes place. Two ladders are placed against it, one before and one behind, on which Joseph and Nicodemus mount; a long white band of linen is stretched across the breast and under the arms of the dead Christ, hanging over the transverse beams of the

Cross on either side, so as to sweep the ground, and thus helping to support the weight of the sacred body. The crown of thorns is then carefully removed, and the nails are drawn, or rather wrenched, out of the hands and feet, first with an instrument, and then by the hand—slowly, and, as it seems, with considerable difficulty; and the arms are laid on Joseph's shoulders, who slowly and tenderly carries the body down the ladder, and lays it with the head in Mary's lap. The Cross stands out bare in the evening light, with the long linen band still hanging over it. This deposition scene, whether regarded in a devotional or an artistic aspect, is truly marvellous. It is certainly *not* taken, as is sometimes said, from Rubens' picture,

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from which it differs in several material particulars. The burial follows, the sepulchre is closed up in front, and all is over.

Here one could almost wish the drama itself should end. Whatever follows must inevitably weaken rather than sustain or deepen the profound impression of the Crucifixion scene, and the more so, as any attempt at supernatural machinery is always apt, if successful at all, to be irreverent without being adequate. There was certainly no irreverence here; but one had a sense of something unsatisfactory—and it was the first time any such feeling obtruded itself—in watching the Resurrection and Ascension. But still I feel sure it would not be right to omit them. It would be like performing the *Messiah* with the third part left

out, and the didactic force of the whole would be left incomplete. One scene, which is a needless, and also a solitary, addition to the Gospel narrative, might, I think, with advantage, be either omitted or curtailed.

The chorus now again appeared in their bright dresses and gilded coronals to sing a hymn of triumph while two *tableaux* were exhibited, the first representing Jonah's escape from the fish's belly—the only one which almost unavoidably produced a somewhat incongruous effect; the second gave the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, but it was not at all equal to some earlier *tableaux* of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Then the curtain rises on the garden-tomb, with four soldiers sleeping before it. Suddenly a sound

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of thunder is heard, the stone is rolled back by an angel, and Christ, in glistening raiment and holding a banner in His left hand, walks forth and instantly disappears to the right of the stage. The soldiers fall to the ground, but presently recover themselves and depart in great perplexity, soon to return to the same spot with a body of Priests and Pharisees, when a long dialogue ensues, ending in the arrangement that they shall tell the tale agreed upon of His disciples stealing Him away. It is this scene which seems to me rather to interrupt than illustrate the continuity of the action; it might at least be curtailed, and some of the omitted appearances after the Resurrection substituted for it. Next follow the visits of the holy women and of St. Peter and

St. John to the Sepulchre, and then the appearance of Christ to the Magdalen, who had lingered about the empty grave, and who at first takes Him for the gardener, but is at once reassured by the single word "Maria," uttered in the tone so familiar to her, and so familiar, too, by this time, to all who heard it, when she kneels to clasp His feet; and as He utters the *Noli me tangere*, and passes from her view, the curtain falls.

For the last time the chorus appear to sing their closing hymn of triumph (*Ueberwunden, überwunden*) with its constant refrain of alleluias, during which the curtain once more rises for a few moments to reveal—not the new Jerusalem with Christ in glory, as the text-books give it, but the little company of be-

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lievers with His blessed Mother gathered round Him on the brow of Olivet, and quickly falls again to shroud His ascending form as He is parted from them and carried up to Heaven. Then, as the last notes of the chorus died away, broke out, happily for the first time, a burst of applause, which was at once suppressed, but ought never to have been attempted. If ever there were sights or sounds to "make deep silence in the heart, for thought to do her part," they are the visions and voices which throughout all their after-life must surely haunt the memory of those who have witnessed the *Passionsspiel* at Ober-Ammergau, and, above all, that one dominant Figure and the deep, unearthly pathos of that one controlling voice, which must henceforth mingle with

every meditation, and supply a living comment on every detail of the Passion and Death of Christ.

If I notice, in conclusion, though only to reject it, a criticism which I have heard made on the performance, it is because, while professing to deal only with subordinate details, it strikes in principle at the whole conception of the drama. It is objected that the rendering is too minutely realistic. If this meant that whatever is simply repulsive should be kept out of sight, in accordance with the old Horatian maxim, *Ne coram populo*, &c., it would be reasonable enough in itself, though irrelevant to the existing form of the drama. There can be little doubt that the revisers of 1860⁴ acted

⁴ The drama was carefully revised for the performance

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wisely—*e.g.* in withdrawing from the stage the actual suicide of Judas and the more terrible scene which formerly followed it. But that is a different matter. The complaint of excessive realism is directed against such details as, *e.g.* the flying away of the doves at the cleansing of the Temple, the crowing of the cock after St. Peter's denials, and perhaps the shower of Manna in the Desert. But it is surely obvious that if these scenes are to be enacted at all, they should be made as life-like as possible. The cock-crowing, for instance, is an integral part of the story of the three denials, and to omit it would seriously mar the general effect. The absence of 1860, under the auspices of Alois Daisenberger, then parish priest of Ober-Ammergau, and who still resides in the village, though advancing years have led him to resign his cure of souls.

sorbing interest of the *Passionsspiel* hinges precisely on its intense reality. It is indeed remarkable how exclusively, almost rigidly, the text of the Gospels is throughout adhered to, except in scenes like the debates of the Sanhedrim, which must have taken place, but of which no record is preserved. Even traditional details, which are simply ancillary to the narrative, and are regarded as fulfilments of prophecy, such as our Lord's falling in the brook of Cedron on the way from Gethsemane to the house of Annas⁵, are excluded. One exception alone is admitted in favour of the world-wide legend of St. Veronica, which I venture to think loses something of its symbolical force when the impression on the handkerchief is

⁵ See Ps. cix. (E.V. cx.) 7.

omitted. The introduction of supernatural machinery is quite a separate question. I could certainly wish the angelic appearances were either dispensed with or made more effective, as they easily might be. But the fault here arises not from over realism, but the reverse.

To objections against dramatizing the Passion altogether, as derogatory to the sacredness of the subject, this is hardly the place to reply at any length. That such representations become profane in themselves and injurious to all concerned if enacted or witnessed in any other than a purely religious spirit, is too evident to require any discussion. And it may not unnaturally be feared that, in an age like our own, the growing popularity of the Ammergau *Passionsspiel* will eventually prove fatal to its

continuance. But I venture to think that the necessity for abolishing it, should it ever arise, will be matter of very deep regret, and few of those who have been this year at Ober-Ammergau will be disposed to say that it has arisen yet. To the simple and devout denizens of that mountain village this decennial solemnity is evidently still, as may it long remain, not an occasion of histrionic display or pecuniary profit, but, to quote the words of the pious editor of one of the most recent text books of the play, "a religious duty, from which they neither can be nor wish to be dispensed by any earthly authority." Their ordinary occupation as wood carvers, chiefly of devotional objects, crucifixes, and the like, tends, no doubt, to develop both their religious and their artistic instincts ; and

the study of the great religious painters, which is expressly enjoined on those destined for the principal parts in the play, and above all for the highest, comes natural to them as a labour of love. They are engaged during the nine years' interval, not only in rehearsing, but, as the writer already quoted forcibly expresses it, "living into" their several characters. By those alike who enact and who attend it, the performance is regarded as an acceptable homage to Him, whose Passion is visibly represented in the Play, as it is mystically represented in the Mass. In saying this I am simply stating facts. I wish I could believe in the literal truth of another assertion of the same writer, that "all who have hitherto witnessed this *Passionsspiel* have gone home nobler and

better men." Of very many it is unquestionably true, and if it is not true of all, the fault is entirely their own. We know that holy things may be approached in an unholy spirit; and those who come to Ammergau from mere idle curiosity or artistic dilettantism, or, still worse, if any such there be, to mock the simple earnestness of a faith they disrelish or despise, had, to say the least, far better stay away. But none who are content to witness the drama in the spirit of those who enact it, as a real, though minor fulfilment of the apostolic injunction to show forth the Lord's death till He comes again, need fear that their visit will prove other than a privilege and a blessing.

"Wenn du das grosse Spiel der Welt gesehen,
So kehrst du reicher in dich selbst zurück."

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